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Alice Ghostley

Alice Margaret Ghostley (August 14, 1923 – September 21, 2007) was an American actress and singer on stage, film and television.

Ghostley was best known for her roles as bumbling witch Esmeralda (1969–72) on *Bewitched*, as Cousin Alice (1970–71) on *Mayberry R.F.D.*, and as Bernice Clifton (1986–93) on *Designing Women*, for which she received an Emmy nomination for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series in 1992.

Ghostley was regular on *Nichols* (1971–72) and *The Julie Andrews Hour* (1972–73).[2]

Alice Ghostley

Ghostley in *Mayberry R.F.D.* (1970)

Born	Alice Margaret Ghostley August 14, 1923 Eve, Missouri, U.S.
Died	September 21, 2007 (aged 84) Studio City, California, U.S.
Occupation(s)	Actress, singer[1]
Years active	1953–2007
Spouse	Felice Orlandi (m. 1953; died 2003)

Early life

Ghostley was born on August 14, 1923 at a train station in Eve, Missouri, to Edna Muriel (née Rooney) and Harry Francis Ghostley, who worked as a telegraph operator.[3] Ghostley grew up in Henryetta, Oklahoma. She attended the University of Oklahoma, but dropped out to pursue a career in theater.[4]

Career

Stage

Ghostley first came to Broadway in Leonard Sillman's *New Faces of 1952* and in the film version released in 1954.[1]

Television

A veteran of early television, Ghostley appeared as Joy, one of the ugly stepsisters in the 1957 musical television production of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, which starred Julie Andrews in the title role. The other stepsister was played by actress Kaye Ballard. Twelve years later, Ghostley guest-starred as a harried maternity nurse on Ballard's comedy series, *The Mothers-in-Law*.[5] Ghostley guest-starred on the NBC police comedy, *Car 54, Where Are You?*, with Joe E. Ross and Fred Gwynne and in two 1961 episodes of *The Tom Ewell Show* starring Tom Ewell. She was also a favorite of Jackie Gleason, who featured her in his "American Scene Magazine" variety hours of the 1960s. In the

recurring sketch "Arthur and Agnes", Gleason played a loudmouthed, inconsiderate braggart talking to Ghostley on her front stoop. Gleason's character treated her thoughtlessly for several minutes before walking away, leaving Ghostley alone to confide to the audience, "I'm the luckiest girl in the world!"

She portrayed recurring characters on several situation comedies, beginning with *Bewitched* in 1966 in "Maid To Order", in which Ghostley played an inept maid named Naomi, who was hired by Darrin Stephens (played by Dick York) to assist his wife Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery) during her pregnancy. Towards the end of the 1965–66 season, actress-comedian Alice Pearce, who was featured as nosy neighbor Gladys Kravitz on *Bewitched*, died. The producers of the series immediately offered the role of Gladys to Ghostley, who refused it. As a result, in the fall of 1966, character actress Sandra Gould assumed the role of Gladys. In September 1969, after the death of actress Marion Lorne, who played Aunt Clara, Ghostley joined *Bewitched* as a semiregular in the role of Esmeralda, a shy witch who served as a maid and babysitter to the Stephens' household.[2] Ghostley's character of Esmeralda was created to replace Aunt Clara's role as a bumbler of magic.[6]

Ghostley's Esmeralda appeared in 15 episodes of *Bewitched* between 1969 and 1972.[7] During her two years on *Bewitched*, Ghostley also joined the cast of *Mayberry R.F.D.*, playing Cousin Alice after Frances Bavier's character, Aunt Bee, was written out of the series. She appeared in 14 episodes.[6]

On February 22, 1969, she appeared as Aggie on *The Ghost & Mrs Muir* (starring Edward Mulhare and Hope Lange). The episode was entitled "Make Me A Match". The captain and Mrs. Muir matched her with Claymore Gregg (Charles Nelson Reilly). On March 6, 1970, she appeared on another episode of *The Ghost & Mrs Muir*, "Curious Cousin". She played nosey Cousin Harriet. She interferes with Mrs Muir's private life. To divert her excessive attention, Claymore, posing as Captain Gregg, comes to court her.[6]

After eight years, *Bewitched* was cancelled by ABC in the spring of 1972. Later that year in September, Ghostley was hired as a semiregular for the ABC-TV variety series, *The Julie Andrews Hour*; in addition to participating in songs and sketches, Andrews and Ghostley were featured in a recurring segment as roommates sharing a small apartment. *The Julie Andrews Hour* was cancelled by ABC in the spring of 1973 after 24 episodes. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ghostley appeared in episodes of situation comedies such as *Hogan's Heroes* (alternating with Kathleen Freeman playing Gertrude Linkmaier, General Burkhalter's sister) and Mrs. Field Marshal Manheim, *Good Times*, *Maude*, *One Day at a Time*, *The Odd Couple*, and *What's Happening!!*.[6]

Between 1986 and 1993, Ghostley portrayed Bernice Clifton, the slightly off-kilter, eccentric friend of Julia and Suzanne Sugarbaker's mother, Perky, on *Designing Women*.[8] She later played Irna Wallingsford in six episodes of *Evening Shade*. She also had a recurring role of Ida Mae Brindle in the sitcom *Small Wonder*, which ran from 1985 to 1989. Among many other guest roles, she appeared in a flashback episode as the crazed mother-in-law of Dorothy Zbornak (Bea Arthur) on *The Golden Girls*. She made a one-time appearance as Great-Grandma in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*. Ghostley also made a few guest appearances on the daytime drama *Passions* in 2000, playing the ghost of Matilda Matthews.[6]

Film

Among her roles in motion pictures, Ghostley appeared in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962),[2] playing Stephanie Crawford, the neighborhood gossip. She starred in *Gator* as Gator's partner in crime who brings her cats along on a burglary. She appeared in the film version of *Grease* as shop teacher Mrs. Murdock. In

1985, she had a supporting role in the Nancy Allen comedy *Not for Publication*.[6] Alice played Grandmama in the direct-to-video movie *Addams Family Reunion*.

Awards

Ghostley received a Tony nomination in 1963 for different roles she played in the Broadway comedy *The Beauty Part*. She also received a Tony Award for Best Featured Actress for her role in *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*.[4] In 1992, she earned an Emmy nomination for her role in *Designing Women*.[4]

Personal life

Ghostley was married to Felice Orlandi, an Italian-American actor, from 1953 until his death in 2003.[4]

Ghostley died at her home in Studio City, California, on September 21, 2007, of colon cancer and a series of strokes.[9][10]

Selected filmography

- *New Faces* (1954) - Herself
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) - Miss Stephanie Crawford
- *My Six Loves* (1963) - Selena Johnson
- *The Flim-Flam Man* (1967) - Mrs. Packard
- *The Graduate* (1967) - Mrs. Singleman
- *With Six You Get Eggroll* (1968) - Molly
- *Viva Max* (1969) - Hattie
- *Ace Eli and Rodger of the Skies* (1973) - Sister Lite
- *Gator* (1976) - Emmeline Cavanaugh
- *Blue Sunshine* (1977) - O'Malley's Neighbor
- *Record City* (1978) - Worried Wife
- *Rabbit Test* (1978) - Nurse Tumm
- *Grease* (1978) - Mrs. Murdock
- *Not for Publication* (1984) - Doris Denver
- *The Odd Couple II* (1998) - Esther, the Whiner
- *Addams Family Reunion* (1998, TV Movie) - Grandmama Addams
- *Palmer's Pick-Up* (1999) - Mrs. Eleanor Palmer
- *Whispers: An Elephant's Tale* (2000) - Tuskless (voice)
- *Mothers and Daughters* (2006) - The Doctor (final film role)

Select television credits

- *Lights Out* as Chambers' Secretary (1951, "Perchance To Dream")
- *The Best of Broadway* as Clara Hyland (1955, "The Show-Off")
- *Star Stage* (1955, "A Letter to Mr. Priest")

- *Playwrights '56* as Mrs. Hope (1956, "Flight")
- *The United States Steel Hour* as Ida Routzeng (1959, "A Taste of Champagne" and 1962; Episode - "You Can't Escape")
- *Dow Hour of Great Mysteries* as Charlotte (1960, "The Dachet Diamonds")
- *Play of the Week* (1960, "Highlights of New Faces")
- *Art Carney Special* (1961, "Everybody's Doin' It!")
- *The Tom Ewell Show* as Polly (1961, "The Chutney Caper") and as Lavinia Barrington (1961, "I Don't See It")
- *Car 54, Where Are You?* as Bonita Kalsheim (1961, "Christmas at the 53rd" and "Love Finds Muldoon")
- *Naked City* as Clara, the Bookkeeper (1963, 'One, Two, Three, Rita Rakahowski")
- *The Trials of O'Brien* as Eve Roberti (1965, "The Trouble with Archie")
- *Bewitched* as Naomi Hogan (1966, "Maid to Order") and as Esmeralda (1969-1972, 15 appearances)
- *Get Smart* as Verna (1966, "The Last One in Is a Rotten Spy") and as Naomi Farkas (1968, "The Farkas Fracas")
- *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* as Miss Feather (1966, "Move Over, Mozart")
- *The Farmer's Daughter* as Jane Marshall (1966, "The Wife of Your Friend May Not Be a Friend of Your Wife)
- *Captain Nice* as Mrs. Nash (1967, 15 appearances)
- *Insight* as Mother (1968, "Watts Made Out of Thread")
- *He & She* as Norma Nugent (1968, "What's in the Kitty?")
- *Love, American Style* as Mrs. Silversmith (1969), Mrs. Billingsley (1971), Mom (1971) and Gladys (1972)
- *The Mothers-in-Law* as Mrs. Irene Wiley (1969, "And Baby Makes Four")
- *It Takes a Thief* as Miss Prillo (1969, "The Second Time Around")
- *Hogan's Heroes* as Gertrude Linkmaier (1969, "Watch the Trains Go By") and as Mrs. Mannheim (1971, "That's No Lady, That's My Spy")
- *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir* as Aggie Burns (1969, "Make Me a Match") and as Cousin Harriet (1970, "Curious Cousin")
- *The Odd Couple* as Mimi (1970, "The Breakup")
- *Mayberry R.F.D.* as Cousin Alice (1970-1971, two appearances)
- *Nichols* as Bertha (1971-1972, two appearances)
- *Here We Go Again* as Mrs. Nicholson (1973, "After the Wedding Bells")
- *The New Temperatures Rising Show* as Mrs. Lindsey (1972, "Ellen's Flip Side") and as Edwina Moffitt (1974, seven appearances)
- *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* as Doctor Agnes Temple (1974, "Bad Medicine")
- *Great Performances* as Mrs. Taylor (1975, "Who's Happy Now?")
- *Big Eddie* as Violet Klabber (1975, "Crashing Violet")
- *Maude* as Hazel M. Hathaway (1976, "Walter's Stigma")
- *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* as Gladys Dillworth (1976, two appearances)
- *Monster Squad* as Queen Bee (1976, "Queen Bee")
- *All's Fair* as Inez (1976, "Living Together")
- *One Day at a Time* as Harriet Loring (1977-1978, two appearances)
- *What's Happening!!* as Mrs. Turner (1977, "The Maid Did It")
- *The Nancy Walker Show* as Louise (1977, "The Partners")
- *CHiPS* as Mamie (1978, "Rustling")

- *Police Woman as Manageress (1978, "Sunset")*
- *Carter Country* (1978, "The Chief's Dressing Gown")
- *Family* as Mrs. Hanley (1978, "A Friend of the Family's") and others
- *Chico and the Man* as Harriett (1978, "The Peeping Tom")
- *Friends* as Mrs. Sandler (1979)
- *Gimme a Break!* as Mrs. Falconberg (1982, "Love Thy Neighbor")
- *Madame's Place* as Herself (1982, "The Nice Bernadette")
- *Trapper John, M.D.* as Marge Collins (1984, "The Fred Connection")
- *Mama Malone* as Nedda (1984, "Connie's Old Flame" & "Shall We Dance?")
- *Tales from the Darkside* as Elinor Colander (1985, "Anniversary Dinner")
- *Highway to Heaven* as Mrs. Schtepmutter (1985, "Cindy")
- *Stir Crazy* (1985, "The Love Affair")
- *Designing Women* as Bernice Clifton (1986-1993)
- *Simon & Simon* as Grandma Marie Cooper (1986, "Family Forecast")
- *The New Leave It to Beaver* as Miss Honeywell (1986, "Miss Honeywell Comes to Town")
- *Punky Brewster* as Mrs. Winston (1987, "Punky's Big Story")
- *The Golden Girls* as Mrs. Zbornak (1988, "Mother's Day")
- *Small Wonder* as Ida Mae Brindle (1988, four appearances)
- *B.L. Stryker* as Mrs. Parkinson (1990, "Night Train")
- *Hearts Are Wild* as Margaret Sawyer (1992, "Pilot")
- *Evening Shade* as Irna Wallingford (1992-1994, six appearances)
- *Daddy Dearest* as Aunt Adelaide (1993, "Thanks, but No Thanks")
- *Cobra* as Lorinda McClure (1994, "Lorinda")
- *Diagnosis Murder* as Mrs. Groviak (1994, "You Can Call Me Johnson")
- *The Client* as Aunt Mabel (1996, "Damn Yankees")
- *Aaahh! Real Monsters* as Grandma (1996), voice of Nurse (1996), Eccentric Woman (1997), voice of Wife (1997)
- *Touched by an Angel* as Mrs. DeWinter (1997, "Labor of Love")
- *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* as Great-Grandma (1997, "Witch Trash")
- *Rugrats* as Mrs. Holkin (1997, two appearances)
- *Channel Umptee-3* as voice of Pandora Rickets (1997)
- *Dharma and Greg* as Alice Binns (1998, "Dharma and Greg's First Romantic Valentine's Day Weekend")
- *101 Dalmatians* as Hester Hen, *the town's witch* (1998, one appearance)
- *Hercules* as Miss Cassiopeia (1998, four appearances)
- *Passions* as Matilda Matthews (2000, four appearances)

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External links

- Alice Ghostley (https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/67604) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Alice Ghostley (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0315933/) at IMDb
- Alice Ghostley (https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/70655%7C10877/wp) at the TCM Movie Database
- Alice Ghostley (http://www.iobdb.com/CreditableEntity/32270) at the Internet Off-Broadway Database
- Alice Ghostley, Comic TV and Stage Actress, Dead at 81 (https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/22/arts/television/22ghostley.html)

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